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What the Wood Whispers to Itself

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With Illustrations

ELISABETH M[illegible]

NEW YORK:
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WHAT THE WOOD WHISPERS TO ITSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF GUSTAV VON PUTLITZ.

BY

E. E. H.

With Illustrations by

ELISABETH MURRAY.

NEW YORK:
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THE POPPY.

THE POPPY.

We are mistaken if we think that the Flowers do nothing but bud, bloom, exhale sweet perfume, and then fade away. This opinion, however wide-spread it may be, springs only from our own egotism, which would make us believe that all things in Nature were created expressly for us, and that, because we perceive their outward life only, they must necessarily have no inner one. But, as I have just said, this is not true, and as every Flower has its own character, and one is modest while another is vain and haughty, one merry and fond of display, and another, perhaps, sweet and shy, so has each its own wishes, longings, sorrows, and loves. All, however, have an unbounded patriotism, or, in other words, a deep attachment not to the land alone, but to the very place which gave them birth, so that they cannot exist elsewhere—a pe-

culiarity which, of late, they have often regretted.

The Flowers have also a language of their own, and, if we only understood it, we would willingly linger many a night in the blooming fields, for that is especially the time of their confidences, to hear the fanciful legends and poems which they relate to one another, making the time pass like a beautiful dream.

I was lying, one lovely moonlight night, on the woods' green carpet, and heard, or dreamed that I heard, as many, perhaps, might choose to believe, a thousand voices arising from the Flowers. It is quite possible that some friendly little elf, for whom I had unconsciously performed an act of kindness, had lent me his hearing for the night; however it may be, the Bulrush was reciting a melancholy lyric poem to her neighbor, who listened with deep attention. In the midst of it, the Tulips, who are considered the gossips of the Flowers, and represent the light literature of the day, chattered away among themselves. Not far off, some pretty little Moss-roses were laughing together at something, evidently very funny, that they had just heard. The Blue-bells, though silent, lent their sanction continually to

what their neighbors were saying, by nodding approvingly to the right and left. But it was quite different with the Ribbon-grass, which shook its head incessantly, as if it did not believe one word that it heard. It may be that the Flowers had perceived me, and would, according to the old proverb, punish me for my indiscretion, or it may, perhaps, have been an every-day theme with them; but this time, certainly, their conversation turned chiefly upon the injustice and unkindness which men show toward them.

"Alas!" cried a blade of Wild Thyme, mournfully, "the clumsy foot of man has again crushed the loveliest of our circle."

"Oh!" said a Larkspur, "they do not heed how we cringe and bow down to them. If they despised us because we were injurious to them, like the Hemlock, I would not say a word; but nothing is harder to bear than their disdain, for they do not consider it worth while even to step out of our way as they pass."

"Nay," interrupted a Forget-me-not, soothingly, "any one would think, by your conversation, that men were indeed utterly unjust. Now, I can refute your assertions. Are we not the

loveliest ornaments of their festivities, and chosen always as messengers to convey their holiest sentiment, love?"

"Those times have quite passed away," said the Sorrel, pettishly. "Do not men, puffed up with pride as they are, consider themselves quite entitled to meddle with the handiwork of their Creator, and, indeed, improve upon it by copying us in miserable, painted, paper things, and with which do they adorn themselves, with us, or those contemptible imitations? And, as for love's messengers, they only take us when they have nothing better, for the langnage of Flowers has long since gone out of fashion; they call it sentimentalism, and laugh at it."

"I admit all that," said the Lily; "but how can men appreciate our feelings if they do not know them? You cannot deny their ignorance of us, when they manifest it so openly. Recollect, now. When night is past, and we look around us in the morning, we miss one or another of our companions, who have either bowed their heads in the evening twilight, or been swept away by the wild night-wind. We then mourn for them, and our eyes fill with tears. Men, without taking the trouble to understand us,

deny that these drops are an evidence of feeling and grief, and say that they are dew, which the morning mist has scattered over us."

This proof of man's want of consideration must have been very convincing, for no one could, for a moment, say any thing in reply. Not far from me grew a cluster of tall, showy Poppies. I had already noticed that they took no part in this dispute so little flattering to myself, but, when this pause occurred, the Blue-bells cried out in clear, ringing tones, "Be quiet, my sisters! the Poppies have something to say to us." All were silent in a moment, for even the Bulrush's long poem had come to an end.

One of the Poppies then raised herself up on her long slender stalk, looked around her, and bowed several times. I supposed that she would first wait to be urged, plead hoarseness, or, at least, offer many excuses, but that cannot be the custom among the Flowers, for she began to say at once, in a very animated tone: "Do you wish to listen to me? Well, I will tell you to what circumstance, according to the old traditions handed down in our family from one generation to another, we Poppies owe the very singular fact of our existence. For you must not think that, at

the creation of the world, the Flowers were strewn all at once over the earth. Oh, no; we came one after another, and every thing happened then very much as it does now in spring."

"And what happens in spring now?" hastily interrupted a Tulip.

"You must ask the Daisy to tell you that," replied the Poppy, "for she always makes her appearance very early, and then do not interrupt me again." The Daisy had always had less attention paid her than any one, and, in fact, was considered by many as rather simple, though her cousin, the Amaranth, having enjoyed greater advantages of education, was held in high estimation. Pleased and embarrassed at the same time, that she should for once in her life be called upon to speak, she looked up gratefully at her patroness, while a delicate blush tinged her white leaves, and began her story, without waiting for another question:

"What we have done to Winter to make him dislike us so much, I cannot tell, and opinions are certainly very much divided upon the subject, but one thing is sure, that he cannot bear us, and never rests till he has driven us all from the earth. But his reign does not last long, and

after him comes our best friend, Spring. As this dear one approaches and looks around him, he is grieved to find that, of all the beautiful children whom he recommended so anxiously to Summer's care on his departure, not one is left, and, wrapping his hair in a long gray veil, for there are neither leaves nor flowers to weave himself a crown with, he lightly touches the earth with his warm, loving hand, and bids his darlings come forth; but not one of them dares to raise his head, so intimidated have they been. Nor is this fear of Winter wholly unfounded, for we have often seen him, when far on his homeward journey, return to smite the Flowers with his icy hand.

"There are, however, a few, peculiarly loving in disposition, who will not keep Spring waiting, but hasten forth to greet him. Chief among these is the good Violet. As she glances timidly around, and sees herself alone upon the cold and dreary earth, she is frightened, and hides her little head again under her green leaves. Men call this modesty, but it is rather fear. Then there arises in her heart a longing for companionship, which she gives utterance to in sweet perfume. Poor little Violet! her desires remain

unsatisfied, for, when the other flowers make their appearance, her life's work is ended. Sometimes, however, she comes forth for a single day, toward autumn, but, her yearnings then being stilled, she no longer breathes out perfume so sweet as at her first coming."

"This is what takes place in spring," resumed the Poppy, "and thus it was also in the early days of creation. One flower came after another. But, at the time of which I am speaking, nearly all had sprung into existence, and the earth was very beautiful, peace and good-will reigning everywhere. Men and animals dwelt happily together, and there was nothing but joy all the day long.

"One being alone, Night, had no share in this universal happiness, and wandered sadly over the young earth. 'Why was she sad?' you will ask. Because she dwelt alone, while every other creature had a companion, and can there be happiness without sympathy? Though she would willingly have concealed it from herself, Night became more and more sensible that she was the only one upon the earth whom the others did not lovingly draw near; for, though she lighted her little lamps everywhere, she still hid the beauty of the earth from men and animals, and that alienated them

all. Not that they actually told her so, but the rapture with which they hailed the morning sun was sufficient proof that they cared little for her. This naturally troubled her, for she was good and loving, and, shrouding herself in her thickest veil, she bewailed her sad fate. We compassionate Flowers, moved by her tears, sought to soothe her grief, and do all in our power to make her happy. But we had nothing to offer except colors and perfume. Our variegated tints seemed to have little charm for her, therefore we breathed upon her our sweetest odors; and indeed several shed no perfume throughout the day, that they might offer Night all their treasures, a custom they have always adhered to. Yet even this devotion could not console the sorrowing creature, and in her grief she prostrated herself before the throne of the Creator, saying:

"'Almighty Father, Thou seest how all things in Thy creation rejoice. I alone wander friendless over the earth, and there is no one to whom I can confide my grief. Day flees before me, however eagerly I hasten after her, and all creatures follow her example. Therefore, Almighty Father, take pity upon my sorrow, and bestow upon me a companion.'

"The Creator smiled in compassion upon Night, and called Sleep into existence to be her friend. Do you not recognize that, created in mercy, his mission is to dispense blessing and comfort? Night took the beloved one in her arms, and another life dawned for her; not only, because she was no longer alone, but that the hearts of all were drawn to her, for she was always accompanied by Sleep, the darling of the living, as Day fled in affright before her.

"Soon other friendly beings followed in their footsteps—Dreams, the children of Night and Sleep. They moved over the earth with their parents, and entered into a treaty of friendship with the childlike hearts of men. But alas! all was soon changed. Evil entered into the world, and the nature of man became sad and gloomy. Children are easily corrupted by adverse influences, and it happened that a few of the Dreams became, in consequence of their intercourse with men, frivolous, deceitful, and unfriendly. Sleep, perceiving the change in his children, wished to remove the wanderers from temptation, but their sisters pleaded for them, saying, 'Leave our brothers with us, they are not so wicked as they appear, and we promise to do all

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in our power to restore them to goodness again.' The father granted the wishes of his loving children, and thus evil Dreams still sometimes accompany him, but they are always, as experience teaches us, especially drawn toward sinful men.

"Evil still continued to increase upon the earth. One beautiful night, a man lay upon the fragrant turf, and Sleep and Dreams drew near him; but Sin prevented them from gaining any mastery over him. In his soul fearful thoughts arose. In vain did Sleep shake over him soothing drops from his enchanted wand—in vain the Dreams flitted before him with their bright pictures—he still resisted their gentle sway. Then Sleep called his children to him. 'Let us depart,' said he, 'this man is not worthy our gifts;' and they fled far from him. As they moved away, Sleep took his wand, half in anger that it had proved so unavailing, and thrust it into the earth; and the Dreams playfully hung their light, joyous visions upon it. Night, seeing this, breathed life into the staff. It took root in the earth, and, growing green, retained the drops which produce sleep; while the gifts which the Dreams bestowed upon it formed themselves into rich and gay-colored leaves.

"Thus did we Poppies spring into life."

The story was now ended, and the Flowers on all sides bowed gratefully to the fair narrator. Morning's soft twilight dawned, and, as Day gradually drew near, the leaves of a full-blown Rose fluttered through the wood, whispering, as they passed, a sad farewell to each Flower, whose only answer was a tear.

THE FIR-TREE; OR, THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS-TREE.

THE FIR-TREE;

OR,

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS-TREE.

"WHY did the Fir-tree rustle when the Daisy said that Winter was wicked, and could not bear the flowers?" asked the Linden.

"Because he was vexed," replied the Oak; "and, when he is vexed, he rustles. Have you never heard that? When the Wind comes rushing through the forest, he cries out to the trees, 'Bow down!' But the Fir-tree says, 'Stay still;' and, if all the others are afraid, and pay their respects to the Wind, the Fir-tree remains perfectly quiet, turns round disapprovingly, and rustles because he is angry."

"Now, what has that to do with Winter and the Daisy?" asked the Linden.

"Ask him, ask him!" muttered the Poplar; "you will then hear what he has to say about it:

he'll give you a sharp answer." But the Linden was still very curious. Who can blame her? When one stands year after year in the self-same spot, he does not willingly give up the pleasure of a story for fear of receiving a sharp answer. If it is too spiteful, he can shake it off; and trees can do that also. The Linden, moreover, was very clever, and thought of a suitable beginning.

"Fir-tree," said she, "how is it that you always wear the same dress, winter and summer, in cold weather as well as in warm?"

"Because I am not vain, and always wishing for something new, as you are," answered the Fir-tree.

"There you have it—take that!" said the Poplar. But the Fir-tree was not telling the truth, for one cannot act against nature. Yet men are, after all, no better, and reckon that as virtue which belongs only to their peculiar temperament. He who has no taste for dress chides the vain; indeed, there are persons who revile poetry, because they have no fondness for it themselves; and they are still more in the wrong than the Fir-tree.

But the Linden was much annoyed at the answer, and wished to have nothing more to say

to him. Yet she was too curious for that; and it was well, for, in the first place, sulkiness avails nothing, and, in the second, she would not have heard the history of Winter, nor should we.

So she muttered awhile to herself, then turned toward her unfriendly neighbor, and said: "You can, nevertheless, tell us something about Winter; for you know him, and love him, so they say. We others know nothing about him, for we sleep when he comes; but you are awake, and can talk to him all that long, long time."

The Fir-tree was silent awhile, and all the trees listened curiously to know what would come of it; the Willow only ventured to say, "Linden, you are courageous, ask him again."

Finally, the Fir-tree answered: "Let me alone, and, if you wish to know any thing about Winter, stay awake. He who wishes to gain knowledge must not sleep his time away."

The conversation would probably now have ended, had the Oak not interceded. He is looked upon as authority among the trees of the wood, because he is the oldest and the strongest. Who knows, if they had paid their respects to him before, whether it would have come to this at last?

"Fir-tree," said he, "you seem an unfriendly companion; but you are not really so cross as you appear, and only turn your rough side out. I know you better, for I saw you when you were scarcely a year old, with only one little green shoot. But why are you so harsh to your neighbor? Has not the same ground brought us all forth? Are not our roots entwined below, as our branches are above? Do we not together brave common dangers, which alone we could not withstand? Besides, it is a foolish thing to isolate one's self. Because the Linden adorns herself with leaves, and you with needles, and because your bark is rougher perhaps than that of the Beech, will you therefore seclude yourself and seem unsociable when you are not? Now, then, talk to your companions—be friendly with them in happy days, that, when sad ones come, you may assist each other."

These were earnest words: the Fir-tree took them to heart, and many others might also! He thought a moment, and then said:

"You wish to hear something about Winter? Well, then, lay aside all your prejudices, for I know you cannot bear him. Do not think that I am partial because he is my friend; I am only

just, because I know him. But now to the point.

"When God created the world, when the flowers sprang up in the fields and the trees in the forests, He called the Seasons to Him, and said, 'Divide among yourselves the flowers and trees, and love and care for them all.' Then the Seasons were very happy, and revelled with the children of Nature. This went on a little while, when dissensions began to arise here and there between them. The daring, restless Spring could not agree with the cautious, deliberate Winter: the glowing Summer found the Autumn phlegmatic. Autumn scolded Spring because he kept back the flowers: in short, the contest became warmer and warmer, and trees and flowers fared ill in consequence.

"Then Autumn said: 'This cannot go on any longer—we cannot live harmoniously together; come, then, and let us divide.'

"And so it happened that the Seasons portioned off the Earth. Winter built his house around the two Poles. Summer wound herself around the middle of the Earth, and Spring and Autumn made their kingdom between them. That they did not abide exactly by this decision,

we shall see later; but it was so at the time I speak of, and Winter dwells yet in his old house."

"How do you know that?" asked the Linden.

"My cousin, who once visited him, told me so."

"Don't you believe him; he is telling lies," whispered the Poplar to her neighbor.

"How could your cousin visit him?" asked the Linden; "was he not fast bound, as we should be?"

"It happened thus," answered the Fir-tree. "There came, once upon a time, bold, enterprising men in search of wood to build a ship. My cousin, a tall, slender Fir, stood proudly among the other trees of the forest: as soon as they saw him he impressed them favorably, and they took him for their mast. The seamen gave him a great sail, and said, 'Hold it fast,' and on his head they placed a many-colored and most showy flag.

"My cousin was very strong, and performed his duty well during the voyage; and, if the wind came, and wished to carry the sail away, he held it fast, and stirred not: therefore, the sailors honored him more than all the wood in the ship. The fleet sailed ever northward, and so it happened that after a while it arrived at the abode

of Winter. The house was strongly built, but very lonely; and, as the ship landed, Winter stepped out, wondering very much at the unexpected visit.

"It happened that he was not received in a very friendly manner, nor did he feel much inclined to hospitality himself, but shook his head so that the snow-flakes drifted around him. Then he perceived my cousin; and, as he has an especial fancy for us Fir-trees, he became very pleasant, and began to chat a little, asking after all his friends. When the mast had told him about everybody, he began, himself, to relate the most wonderful stories; and what you are now about to hear is one of them.

"There was, indeed, no end to his adventures; and the old man was so happy over the memories of the past, that he brought them all to light, and would not let the ship go, but held it fast in a tight embrace. My cousin says he can never half describe the beauty of the scene; but, the better he liked it, the worse it fared with the crew.

"One morning he heard them consulting together. 'Our wood is burned, and our provisions are nearly exhausted,' said the pilot; 'and, if the ice does not soon disappear, we must perish. Let

us cut down the mast and burn it; this will at least keep us a little while longer.'

"When my cousin heard this, he entreated Winter to release the ship; and Winter consented, in order to save his darling, though he would not have done so to gratify the men. He loosened the ice, and the ship and her crew returned safely home."

"That was very good of him," cried the trees unanimously.

"But now let me return to my story," continued the Fir-tree. "The earth was divided, and every season had its own kingdom; and it would have remained so to this day, had not Spring, in his capricious fashion, demanded a change. He did not like to remain always in the same place, so he called the Seasons together, and made them the following proposition:

"'Let us make a different arrangement,' said he, 'so that the Earth may belong to us in common, and we shall not then be forced to remain in a given space. Each one of us will then have an appointed time to visit the earth, and there reign supreme.'

"'I am content,' said Summer, 'if I may keep the girdle of the earth for myself.'

"'And I my poles,' said Winter.

"The inconsiderate Spring consented to any thing, so that he might gain his point, and Autumn hoped to indemnify himself in some other way.

"So the contract was concluded, and Spring wished at once to begin his reign, when the thoughtful Winter said: 'In order that no one may take all the beautiful things of the earth, and keep them for himself, we had better divide them also.'

"'Agreed,' said Spring. 'I will take the buds.'

"'The flowers belong to me,' said Summer.

"'The fruits are mine,' cried the avaricious Autumn, 'and Winter may keep the leaves of the trees.'

"Winter had nothing to say to that, so Spring began his rule. He kissed the trees and flowers till they brought forth buds, and all looked smilingly upon him.

"As the buds burst open, and a thousand colors shone in leaf and flower, Summer ascended the throne of Earth.

"But immediately order began to give way, for Autumn, who was always thinking of his

own share, made a special agreement with Summer; she was to leave him flowers, and he would give her fruit in exchange; yet, as it is said, he would be no loser thereby, but would still keep the best for himself. Now he alone obtained the mastery, and gathered in the fruits with busy hands, for he had a right to do that.

"Then something happened which grieved Winter very much. You remember that at the time of the division the leaves fell to his share. But in the glowing time of love, when, above, leaf hung upon leaf, and below the flowers shone in the grass and coquettishly unfolded their varied colors, a flirtation arose between leaves and flowers. As usual, it began with all sorts of playfulness. If the warm and beaming sun wished to shine upon the flowers, the leaves of the trees put themselves in its way; but, before the flowers were aware of it, the branches bowed, so that the rays of the sun might suddenly fall and dazzle them. They shut up their eyes, and the leaves laughed above them. But, when a refreshing rain came, the leaves held up the drops; and, just as all seemed over, they let them fall, so that the flowers were frightened and shook their heads.

"That which at first was only playfulness, soon became a service of love; for the sun grew warmer and warmer, and the tender little buds and blossoms would all have been dried up, had not the leaves shielded them from its fiery rays.

"After this deeply serious attention, playfulness was no longer enough, and they sought a means of union. Yet above hung the leaves, and below the flowers shone in the grass.

"Love, however, always finds a way of its own. Leaves and flowers soon chose a messenger to bear up and down their sighs and vows; and this messenger was the Ivy. Springing up among the flowers, he wound himself around the trees like a green garland, embracing leaf after leaf, the bearer of sweet messages, a silent love-chain.

"Then the reign of Autumn came to an end, and he wished to pluck the last flowers in the field. The leaves looked longingly down, and entreated Autumn most earnestly to allow them to visit their dying loves.

"Autumn yielded, though he had no right to anticipate Winter, who alone held sway over them. He shook the trees, and down fluttered the free leaves to the earth. Now first began a mad life of love. Autumn, who took great pleas-

ure therein, frolicked in the wildest manner: he drove the leaves in a whirling dance around the flowers, until, faint and weary, they hung their heads and laid themselves down in an everlasting slumber.

"Then Winter came. Naked and drear, field and wood received him. Nothing green was to be seen but us poor Fir-trees and the Ivy, which still wound itself from tree to tree, as if to erect a triumphal arch for him, and from branch to branch, as if it would conceal the faithlessness of the leaves, and lend the trees an ornament to replace the lost and scattered foliage.

"Winter saw it and was touched; and, while he angrily threw down the last few that remained, and chased them over ice and snow, he spoke fervently to the Ivy thus:

"'I will protect you and preserve you for the friendly office that you have chosen. Remain the messenger of love, and bear silent greetings from flower to leaf, from Autumn to Spring; be an eternal bridge from season to season.

"'Your duty is this, to embrace and unite, and, as the ever-green memorial of flower and field, you shall yourself withstand the severity of winter.'

"Thus spoke Winter to the Ivy; but to us Fir-trees he gave his full approval, and prepared for us an honor which you others cannot share."

"And what is that?" asked the rest of the Trees, offended.

"Winter is the season of the emotions," continued the Fir-tree, "therefore did he recognize the deep feeling of the Ivy, and honor it. Men know this, for at no time do they cling so closely to one another as in winter. So he brings with him the overflowing, holy, mysterious Christmas season; and in its train one ever sees the kindly spirit, Santa Claus, the friend alike of old and young, whose charms none can resist. Night and day, the mother makes her plans in the early winter season, but only because Santa Claus is constantly whispering in her ear; and whoever goes out on Christmas-eve, always brings home more than he meant, and finds his purse emptier than he intended it should be.

"It is not the beautiful things which charm him; no, it is still Santa Claus, who watches everywhere, and whispers, and pulls at the heart-strings, so that the hand opens again and again, until it has prepared the most abundant Christmas joys.

"We Fir-trees know this, for we always share them deeply. To us belongs the honor of being the 'Christmas-tree;' and, in the most joyous festivities, the good spirit of Santa Claus stands ever in our midst. We never fail in castle nor cottage. However poor the parents may be, they hang a pair of candles upon our green boughs for the merry children. Gold and silver weigh us down; we bear glittering fruits, and the little ones clap their hands before us.

"However beautiful every thing else may be, the Christmas-tree still remains more beautiful than all; for Santa Claus has invested it with a peculiar and wonderful charm. Perhaps the little ones love us because we have a childlike spirit. Around our green boughs Hope entwines many bright and shining pictures; rich and golden they gleam there, mysterious and unintelligible.

"But one bright vision after another departs, the gold is tinsel, hopes fade away, and the mystery is unravelled; with the last few spangles, the whole wonder vanishes, and there is nothing left but a withered Fir-tree. In the heart of the child, one golden dream after another is scattered; one mystery after another, in which it has been

veiled, is unfolded; and, after all, what else is life but this, the experience of the child?"

"When the spangles fall, is thy glory over?" asked the Aspen.

"We are then put in the fireplace," said the Fir-tree, "and we hear many beautiful stories, which men tell as they watch the glowing flame. We listen, and if any thing is said that displeases us, we crackle so that the sparks fly out, and men draw closer together in the chimney-corner. And, whenever the golden apples are consumed, the children glance mournfully from their hiding-places, as the Christmas-tree burns up.

"So you see this is the history of Winter and the Christmas-tree. Some other time, I will relate to you a story which a Fir-tree heard in the chimney-corner, for men know wonderful things."

"Yes, some other time."

THE FOREST-BROOK.

THE FOREST-BROOK.

THE Fir-tree closed his recital with a doubtful promise of continuation. His last words softly died away, and over the whole wood fell a deep stillness. One sound alone disturbed this holiday-like repose—the plashing of the Forest-brook, which fell with measured beat on roots and stones —the everlasting time-piece of the wood.

As it flowed on and on, now glistening brightly in the sunshine, now troubled by the shadows of trees and clouds whose images trembled as they were mirrored in its depths, its monotonous tones formed themselves into intelligible words, and unsolicited, yet narrowly observed by Trees and Flowers, the Forest-brook began its story.

The Brook thus began:

"Do you know from whence I come? Can you divine my origin? Any one can tell you about the Meadow-brook; it springs visibly forth, over

stone and mound, like a little fountain, growing larger and larger till the short dress of the grass conceals it no longer, though the blades stretch lovingly over it, and at last is encircled by a stiff bodice of reeds, fringed with the delicate wild flowers.

"Every one knows where the Mountain-brook comes from too. Upon the heights lies the snow, the eternal crest of the mountain, which the sun alone colors as it rises and sets, and which the clouds adorn with a wondrous veil as they pass over it. In the depths of the ravine near, glistens the dark-blue ice of the glacier; outwardly it wears an unchanging aspect, but within stirs a vigorous life; it melts and flows, and the drops of water are ever playing 'hide and seek' in its clefts and crevices, for the Sun-god kisses incessantly the summit of the mountain. His faithful love moves and softens its proud icy heart, and the springs are born of these kisses. Merrily they frolic, until the space becomes too narrow for them, and then they find a way of escape. But, when they step forth into the light, they are amazed and startled at the wide world spread out before them. Other little streams, led by curiosity, follow in their footsteps, first moving hesitatingly,

and then faster and faster, till they spring forth a joyous brook, leaping playfully, like the chamois, himself mountain-born, from crag to crag. Sometimes the brook is covered with foam, white as the falling snow, and again it becomes a placid mirror, sparkling and clear, like the ice of the glacier, until it sinks down, at last, in the valley, and reposes peacefully in the tranquil plain.

"But where do I, the Forest-brook, come from? You cannot find my birthplace, for I am neither the child of ice nor snow. Follow my course. Here I seem to spring forth from my hiding-place, behind a stone or tuft of moss, but off I go again, and far away, behind the gnarled tree-roots, I look laughingly up at you. Now I stretch myself out a broad mirror among thousands of shrubs and flowers, and now I sink down deep amid the rumbling stones, which, in rivalry of the wood's green dress, wear on their gray heads little caps of moss. But still I flow, ever and anon trickling forth again. You cannot find my source, for that yet remains the enigma of the wood.

"But listen now, and I will reveal it to you.

"Upon a delicate cloud, which floated lightly over the fields below, sat a little sprite, the lovely

attendant of the Elfin Queen, and arranged the jewels of her mistress. In a casket by her side lay a long string of costly pearls. 'Guard well,' said Titania, 'these tears of the sea; they are my loveliest ornament.'

"Pearls are, indeed, the unshed tears of the sea, lying concealed in its deep abyss, until the fisher, at the peril of his life, brings them to the light. He finds them solid and firm; but they look, in their languid brilliancy, as if they had just fallen from weeping eyes.

"The sprite was enchanted with them, and lifted the string up to see how brightly they would shine in the sunlight; but pearls are not like precious stones, which borrow their lustre from without: the tears of the sea are repressed emotions, shining only from within.

"Unnoticed, behind the sprite, sat Puck, the torment of men and elves; and, while the little creature was rejoicing over her treasures, the rogue cut the string, and away rolled the pearls, first upon the clouds, and then down, down to the earth.

"The little sprite awhile sat horror-struck; but, soon recovering herself, she darted down after them. As she hovered in the boundless

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space, between heaven and earth, she saw the clear little balls scattered in every direction, and, in despair, was on the point of turning back, when she perceived a green field, where, amid the grass and flowers, glistened a thousand pearls, which she supposed were the lost ones. Still holding the casket in her hands, she diligently began to gather them into it. It was nearly full before Titania's lovely attendant discovered that they were not tears of the Sea, but dew, the tears of the Flowers, and sadly turned to renew her search; when, lo! she saw pearls, love's tears, falling from the eyes of a mother, as she bent over her dying child; and, as she went farther on, she found yet other weeping eyes, so many tears, indeed, that her casket overflowed.

"Alas! how many are shed upon the earth; for, from the eyes of men, there often gushes a wonderful stream! But its origin is well known: it is the heart. There pain, sorrow, repentance, and sometimes even joy, struggle with each other till the little fount overflows. But the charms which it exercises are potent, for the heart must indeed be very hard which is not touched by the tears even of strangers. Men are often astonished at them, and say, 'I have no pity for them—

they are well deserved;' but this is wrong, for they are still tears, coming, perhaps, from a heart which has had many a sad throb.

"Our little sprite deemed them all the lost treasures, closed the casket, and soared aloft with it. It seemed heavier and heavier, for tears are no light weight; but, when she opened it, she found that all the supposed pearls had melted together. Comfortless, she flew from cloud to cloud, bewailing her fate, for she was dear to them all. The clouds sent their rain down upon the earth, to aid her in her search. It streamed and flowed, and trees and shrubs bent and shook off the drops; but the lost pearls were no more to be seen.

"Puck, the rogue, saw the sorrow that he had caused, and it grieved him; for he liked to tease, but not to give pain; and, diving down into the lap of earth, he begged from his friends, the goblins and gnomes, bright, shining crystals and glistening bits of ore, and joyfully carried them to the little sprite. 'There are all your treasures again,' said he, 'better and more beautiful than before.'

"The little sprite rejoiced, and the clouds ceased to rain; but, as she examined the gift more

closely, she saw it was only 'gloss and glitter;' and, angrily tearing off the covering which held them, she threw them far from her, so that the glittering fragments fell in a wide arch over the horizon. This was the first rainbow. Since then, whenever the clouds weep, Puck brings his spangles again, and the spectacle is repeated. The rainbow is indeed beautiful; we all rejoice over it, and so do men: but it is still delusive, a gift of the gnomes, a creation of the rogue Puck.

"Men know this well too, for, whenever they try to catch it, it hastens on unattainably before them, and vanishes in an instant. What becomes of it? It falls into the sea, say the children, and the water-nymphs make their beautiful garments of it. That which a happy accident produced, Puck ever and anon creates for himself. He moves over the heavens scattering his treasures, and, if any of them are left, he flies back again, and builds with the rest a second, smaller, more delicately-tinted bow. That is the reason you so often see this shining appearance doubled in the horizon; but it only happens when the clouds weep in sympathy with the poor little creature whom Puck teased and then sought to console.

"Our little sprite still sat sadly upon the

cloud, and could not rejoice at the rainbow, though it had sprung into existence for herself. At this moment Titania was seen approaching. The capricious queen chanced to be in one of her merry moods, and, when her little attendant confessed the cause of her grief, she smiled and quickly forgave her. It may be that she cared little for the loss, because one of the sea-spirits, whose heart she had won, had promised her another necklace of pearls; for the great are lavish, even of the tears intrusted to them. But what was to be done with the heavy contents of the chest which the little sprite still held in her arms?

"'Hasten down to my secret, snug home in the woods,' said Titania, 'and pour these drops over the fragrant shrubs; still retaining their own nature, they shall unite and become the tears of the forest.'

"The sprite obeyed the behest of her queen, and thus flowed the first Forest-brook—thus the Wood also had tears of its own. Do you now know whence I come? My tears, like those of men, spring from the heart, the hidden heart of the wood. When sadness, longing, and grief, throb within, they flow.

"In summer, when so many children of the Forest are borne away and destroyed, I move softly but incessantly on. In autumn, when all depart, I weep in silence over the flowers and leaves which the wind often strews in my path, so that, in my distress for them, I become their grave. In the desolate loneliness of winter I am benumbed, and my tears become pearls like the repressed sorrow of the Sea; thus, I rest upon roots and stones, with the sad brilliancy of weeping eyes. But in spring, when a longing arises in all hearts, when the forest tears flow in sadness or joy, rising I overflow my banks to greet on all sides the flowers and grass.

"Often too, my depths are stirred by sympathy; for when the clouds weep rain, or the flowers dew, the Forest-brook sobs also. Do you not feel from my whole appearance, and from the breezes of tenderness and sadness, which I waft toward you, that my source is indeed the heart of the wood?

"The melancholy Reeds crowd around me. Wherever I flow, springs up the sensitive Forget-me-not, which softly glances up, like loving eyes in the hour of departure. The Weeping-willow, with its mournful drapery, dips its branches into

my waves, and the stone itself, the unchanging stone, over which time passes unnoticed, weeps for me, as my waves flow over it, and my kisses are the only ones that it does not withstand. Therefore do I love the stone.

"Men know a peculiar and sad legend of a man who is to outlive every one, whom Death shuns perpetually. The stone reminds me of him. It is the Wandering Jew of the woods, and can relate to you many stories, for its memory dates back to times long since past away.

"Puck, the rogue, is now jealous of the Forest-brook, which he wishes to surpass with his spangles, and he gives continual proofs of it, by mischievously throwing a root or sharp stone in my path, that my waves, dashing over it, may be scattered. Then a thousand colors, like the rainbow, glisten around me in the sunlight. These are Puck's spangles, which he fastens to my spray, as if he would say, 'Are not my gifts the most beautiful of all?' But they vanish quickly, and I flow on unchanged.

"Thus the ludicrous is often mingled with the sorrowful, as if at the bidding of some malicious spirit. Man, even when his heart is ready to break with grief, is convulsed at times with wild-

est laughter, and smiles often play over tearful faces. In the deepest harmonies of Nature occurs strange discord. On the greenest turf and amid the most luxuriant foliage we often find dried roots and withered branches. In the fullest and most beautiful clusters of roses, we see a little one, checked in its growth, peeping forth from the midst of its sisters like a distorted face from a bevy of beauties. Thus Puck ever makes trouble, but the thoughtful mind, like Nature, reconciles all these incongruities."

The Forest-brook now ceased speaking, but the stillness continued, flowers and leaves alone stirring softly. Suddenly it became excited—a dry branch broke from the summit of an oak, with a crackling noise, and fell into it, scattering the leaves in every direction. The drops sprang sullenly up from its depths. A moment more, and all was again still.

This is what Puck did, the rogue!

THE STONE.

THE STONE.

THE stillness did not long continue. Indeed, how could it? Where so many beings stand side by side, and live so closely together, there must always be something to talk about. Trees and Flowers, moreover, had acquired a taste for these recitals, and were very anxious to hear more of them.

"If the Stone really does know any thing worth relating," said a tall Foxglove, "we must beg him to let us hear it; for it is certainly his duty to contribute his share to the general amusement, since he is always crowding in between us and preventing us from being together, and yet is always silent himself."

"Foxglove is certainly the most inquisitive person in the world," said a Strawberry-blossom.

"Inquisitive!" retorted the Foxglove; "I

never can understand why you are always upbraiding me with that."

"Because you are forever prying into things, and stretching your head up as high as you can, to see all that is going on around you," replied the Strawberry.

"What nonsense!" said the Foxglove; "I only do that in order to keep watch over the Stone."

"A good excuse!" muttered the Strawberry.

"Well, I should like to know what you are good for," said the Foxglove.

"I bear fruit."

"You two are always quarrelling," said the Beech, looking down upon them, "and one is just as silly and curious as the other. But, after all, what can one expect from children a year old?"

This imprudent speech came near resulting in open war; for all the Flowers felt themselves insulted by it, and decided unanimously not to allow such an offence to go unpunished. So they appointed the Iris commander-in-chief of the standing army. The light troops of Wolf'sbane armed themselves at once, and the heavy artillery of the Thorn-apple was soon set in motion. The Foxgloves and Strawberries, who had caused the

whole trouble, made up their minds to unite against their common enemy. The nettles and thistles, the militia of the Flowers, were ordered out, and a call was made for volunteers.

The Roses were first on the field, with thorns ready sharpened. It seems, by-the-way, that they had a grudge of their own against the Trees, who would never recognize them as equals, although their stems often grew very tall. This feeling had existed between them for many years, and skilful diplomacy had often been necessary to soothe it. In all their discussions, the Acacia had made herself very conspicuous by espousing with great zeal the cause of the Roses, with whom she stood upon the closest and most friendly relationship. Unfortunately, the negotiations, from the position of Flowers and Trees, always ended in talk; though, on that very account, they possessed greater diplomatic value, since the last discussions found them as far advanced as the first. Nor were the others indifferent to this affair of honor. The Anemones held a long debate upon the rights of the Flowers, and the Bulrush composed a poem for the occasion. The Whortleberries filled their little knapsacks, and offered themselves as sutlers, and a large number of different kinds of Flowers

formed themselves into a volunteer corps, and talked with the utmost enthusiasm about dying for the public weal, and at the same time painted secretly, and in the liveliest colors, the part that each one would take in the great forthcoming struggle.

The affair was really becoming serious, though the Trees had not yet made any warlike preparations, for the majority of them seemed very much displeased at the idea of a disturbance. The Fir-tree, especially, was opposed to any thing of the kind, as he had just given an account of the tender feeling existing between the Flowers and the Leaves of the Trees, and it would seem as if he had not been telling the truth. Besides, most of the Flowers had already ceased to desire war, and much preferred to listen to the Stone. It was therefore decided that the Hawthorn and Blackberry should meet, and enter into negotiations for peace. The choice was a wise one, for the Blackberry had a peculiar interest in the matter, being slightly related to the Strawberry, with whom the trouble had indirectly originated; while the Hawthorn, dwelling between the disputants, had always been on good terms with both. But it was not an easy matter to settle, as the Beech could not be persuaded to take back her unfortunate

speech; at last, however, a way was found of evading the difficulty; without retracting her assertion, she was yet quite willing to acknowledge that the Stone had lived longer even than the Trees, adding, at the same time, that it had not been her intention to wound the feelings of the Flowers, for whom she had always had the highest regard. Upon this, the Foxglove muttered awhile to herself, and the clever little Carnation declared that the Beech might as well have said nothing, but the Flowers generally seemed satisfied, and, with mutual expressions of esteem and friendship, the contest ended.

The Beech's assertion had again drawn attention to the Stone, and the desire of hearing him speak seemed even greater than before; for, after the late battle-cry and stormy uprising, all longed to be transported once more into the realms of imagination. But how was the silent, uncommunicative Stone to be approached? The Trees wished the Brook, with whom he had always condescended to live upon the most amicable terms, and who was now in especial favor, to make the first advances; but the Flowers thought the Grass, the Moss's most intimate friend, the best person to bring it about. In this difference of

opinion the newly-concluded peace seemed to be tottering, when the Brook himself suggested still another way.

"Ask the Fern, who is neither Tree nor Flower, to intercede with the Stone, for he is his most confidential friend, bending over him and nestling by his side, while he pets and caresses him. The Stone can never refuse *him* any thing."

"Fern," said the Flowers, "will you try and persuade him to talk to us?" The Fern gravely nodded assent. All listened, and the Brook murmured as if to give a word of encouragement, but no one could tell whether he did or not. The Trees shook themselves as a preliminary to standing perfectly still, and all the Flowers stretched their little heads up out of the grass. In the mean time the Fern conveyed the Wood's request to the Stone, and soon his voice was heard resounding through the leaves and moss which covered him:

"The Brook is perfectly right in saying that I am the oldest person in the wood, and know a great deal that happened long before your recollection. The accounts that you have given are for the most part correct, though here and there

I noticed a few mistakes. It is true, as the Poppy told you, that the Flowers came one after the other, and the Fir also said truly that the Seasons divided the earth among themselves; but there was a long, long period before that, and many contests must have taken place before every thing attained its present condition.

"When God created the world, the earth was a vast rock, stern and barren. As it lay cold and immovable, the Lord sent the Elements, three mighty beings, to warm and fructify it. First came Fire, the elder brother, in his dress of purple and gold. Fiercely and uncontrollably he raged over the earth, stamping upon the rocks, and overturning them in the most excited manner. Here and there he split off a few large and small pieces of rock, throwing them in triumph from him. That is the reason that you so often see Stones of various sizes scattered over the earth, without plan or order, just where the caprice of this ungovernable Element left us. But the contest did not result in favor of Fire, for, in proportion as he ceased to rage, and showed signs of weakness, the Rocks gathered strength and skill to resist their adversary, who finally had to succumb; he was taken prisoner, and the

Rocks fastened him securely in their deepest caverns. That every Stone conceals Fire, you all know, for when we strike each other the sparks fly out, and these are all parts of the one great power. How the Fire labors and struggles in the recesses of the earth, I will tell you later.

"When Fire was thus subdued, his younger brother, Water, came in his dress of silver-green. He was more clever and judicious than Fire, and had, moreover, profited by his brother's experience, learning from him what kind of an adversary he had to deal with. He saw, too, that open warfare was not always the most successful, and therefore thought he would try prayers and entreaties. He dashed over the Rocks, caressing them, and struggling with them by turns, now using persuasion, and now cunning and force.

"The earth quickly began to assume a different aspect, for Water took firm possession of all the places that his brother had conquered. He enlarged still more the boundaries of the basin where the Sea now is; the Rocks good-naturedly consented to this, and Water cunningly rose higher and higher therein, till at last he dashed with great force over them, nestling down where the valleys now are.

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"Still all remained unfruitful and desolate. Then God sent the sweet sister of the Elements, Air, in her soft blue drapery, to reconcile and bless all things. She tried to make peace with the Rocks, but they would not release Fire; they only gave her permission to visit her imprisoned brother as often as she felt inclined. Whenever she did so, she borrowed some of his warmth, and shook it over the earth, which immediately showed signs of life. Seeds began to germinate, and send forth roots; but heat alone would not suffice. Gently and refreshingly must Water penetrate the earth before it could grow green and prosper. He would gladly have done so, had his limits not been so strictly defined. He sent Air, however, a greeting in warm, brotherly kisses, which she gathered and scattered over the earth, and it became green; Trees and Flowers budded, and men and animals could now live upon it.

"Air, in this way, visited her two brothers alternately, and each bestowed his gifts upon her—one a fiery glow, and the other delicate vapors. You may yet see Fire's gifts in the blush of evening and in the glow of the morning light; and those of Water, in the mist that rises as he

takes leave of Air, passing away in heavy Clouds. But these Clouds are not happy away from earth, and, as Air suffers them to be borne away by her attendants, the Winds, they look longingly down, until, overcome by homesickness, they return to earth, dissolved in tears. Once, as they descended, Flame, who accompanied Air, refused to linger any longer by her side, and flashed over the earth, now tenderly and passionately, and now with wild and fearful threats. Then, for the first time, was seen the mysterious Tempest, and all creatures were filled with fear. The gentle aspirations of the Clouds excited it, as well as the vivid glow of the lightning. Horror, mingled with a feeling of sadness, took possession of men and animals, trees and flowers. But the blessing of Air went with it, and, as Fire and Water returned to the earth, all things arose refreshed and invigorated.

"Of all that happened after this, the arrangement of the Seasons and the growth of the Plants, you have already been told. We Stones see all around us blooming and green, and rejoice that it is so, though we lie exiled and forgotten upon the earth, which formerly belonged wholly to us. It was, therefore, very thoughtless in the Foxglove

to say that we intrude ourselves everywhere, for you others crowd around us, and will not permit us to rest quietly, even in the little space allotted to us."

The Foxglove, at this speech, became very much embarrassed, and hung her little head, so that her flowing locks might hide her blushes. The Strawberry laughed under her three green leaves; and the Beech rustled above them. The Brook, fearing the original quarrel might be renewed, said, quickly, "We, the old people of the wood, are very grateful to you for this account, but you promised us something more."

"What else do you wish to know?" inquired the Stone.

"Will you not tell us what Fire did in the caves of the Rocks, and whether he bore his imprisonment cheerfully?"

"Not toward the last," replied the Stone; "for though he was cheered by the visits of his sister, and had, through her intercession, the consolation of fructifying the earth, he still secretly hoped to regain his freedom, and, with it, his former power. But this would have been very unfortunate, resulting, perhaps, in the destruction of all things. Still imprisoned, therefore, in the

recesses of the Rocks, he contrived all kinds of tricks and fun, to pass the time away. Melting a stone, he dissolved in the mixture the colors of his own shining drapery; thus was gold formed. Then, borrowing Water's delicate tints, as they glistened everywhere about him, he transformed them to silver. He even mingled some preparation of his own with the red and black garments of his jailers, the Rocks, and it became iron. But these things are not so rich in blessings as we are apt to think. Gold and silver are very delusive, though men, in their folly, perpetually search for them; and iron always will be a harsh and discordant metal, because the Rocks bestowed so unwillingly their colors upon it.

"Gold, silver, and iron, were now made; and Fire, becoming weary of using the same colors, commissioned Air to search for others. So she collected various grasses and flowers, and carried them to him the next time she visited him; and he painted, with the delicate tints borrowed from her bouquet, precious stones of various colors, throwing over them all a portion of his own brilliant glow. Sometimes, in Fire's laboratory, drops of the coloring matter would fall, when he wiped and laid aside his brush, and thus origi-

nated the tinsel, dross, and false jewels, which shine and yet have no value—which tempt and deceive—the very ones, indeed, which the Brook told you Puck makes the rainbow of."

"We have never seen Air carry off any of our sisters," said a Tulip, as she nodded her head incredulously.

"Because you have never watched her carefully," replied the Stone. "Look at the evening sky, in which all colors are represented, though you have never observed them. There you will find the dress of the Roses, the yellow of the Crocus, the purple of the Violet, the green of the Grass, mingled with the deep crimson of the Poppy—more colors, indeed, than words can express. This wonderful combination is not visible during the whole evening, but only when Air gathers a bouquet and carries it to Fire. It is true you only see the splendor of the coloring, because the distance is too great for you to recognize your sisters; but, if you question your heart, you will at once be convinced of the truth of what I have told you. Wonderfully drawn to them, you turn your head longingly, though unconsciously, toward your departing friends. You are familiar with this feeling; but you are such creatures of

earth, and so surrounded by mankind, that you no longer have faith in your own perceptions, and question, in vain, the wisdom of the world for that which your heart alone can reveal."

"What did Fire do with the bouquet, after he had extracted its tints?" asked the Forget-me-not.

"He preserved it, colorless indeed, but glittering and imperishable, in the strata of the rocks, where it was changed to shining crystals."

The Stone was now silent, and the Oak said: "Pardon me if what I am about to ask you should hurt your feelings, for I surely need not be afraid of vexing any one so clever and learned as you are. Remember I am, next to you, the oldest person in the wood, and am often called, on account of my age and steadfastness, which characteristics I share with you, the imperishable Oak. Therefore I feel that I have a right to your confidence. We others, who dwell upon the earth, have an aim in life, an ever-changing destiny; we grow, bloom, and bear fruit, each one after his kind, but you Stones lie unchanged, always in the self-same place. Are you not sometimes sad and weary?"

"You are just like men," replied the Stone, amused and indignant at the same time, "and

look upon all your doings as of the greatest importance—the chief aim, indeed, of the whole creation. You grow, bloom, and bear fruit, but what do you gain by it? You fade away, and are forgotten. Time passes his hand over the place where you stood, and every trace of you vanishes. Each one of you, whoever he may be, is but a drop in the great ocean of Nature, and which of you can tell why he is placed here?

"I am not weary," continued the Stone, "though I have so long lain motionless; for I am feelingly alive to the changes going on around me. Many thousand years have passed over me, no two of them alike. Sometimes I hear tidings of a far-distant land, for I lie with my ear to the ground, and the Rocks transmit to me their secret conversations concerning the many beautiful places of earth. Thus Nature is constantly revealing to me her wonders."

"Yes," said the Fir-tree, confirming this assertion, "there are beautiful places upon the earth, for my cousin has often told me about them. He visited them, you know, when he was mast of a ship."

"Oh; yes," said the Aspen, contemptuously, "regions where there is nothing but ice and snow,

and where your friend Winter cunningly ensnares everybody."

"You could not have been very attentive to my story," said the Fir, quietly. "Did I not tell you that there are many places which belong only to Summer, which Winter never comes in contact with, where the trees are always green, and the flowers bloom perpetually, where water is never chilled by ice, and the snow only scatters, in passing over, her cool, cloud-like kisses?"

"Ah," cried all the Flowers, in a breath, "could we only live there!"

"I often visit them," said the Brook, proudly, and the pleasant thought made him jump up and dash merrily on—"I plunge into a stream on its way to the Sea, and am thus borne from land to land."

"I will tell you," said the Stone, "about a wonderfully beautiful place of which I have just heard. In former times, when Water made a treaty of peace with the Rocks, he glided softly into a lovely little bay, and the Rocks formed a circle around him. This became the favorite dwelling-place of the Sea, and he permitted Air to visit him there, giving her full power over the shore.

"'Dip your feet in my waves,' said the Sea to the Rocks, 'and I will cool them for you.'

"'I will crown your heads with flowers,' said Air, 'and Earth shall spread her drapery around you.'

"'And since you are so beautiful,' said Water, again, 'I will hold a mirror before you, that you may behold your glory; and your image shall ever adorn my waves.' And they fulfilled their promises.

"The next time that Air visited Fire, she told him about this lovely place, where her happiest hours were passed.

"'May I not see it?' asked Fire.

"'I must first get the Rocks' permission,' replied Air.

"The Rocks just then happened to be in very good humor, on account of the friendly feeling which Air and Water had manifested for them. They were, therefore, easily persuaded to open a window in Fire's prison, on the summit of a mountain, that he might look out whenever he felt inclined, on condition that Water would allow one of their number to stand in the bay and keep guard over him. Just where the circle opens to let the Sea in, stands this Rock, looking

on one side far into the Gulf, of which I have just told you, and, on the other, toward the Sea's vast expanse. From him I received this account.

"On the shore opposite is Fire's window. During the day, when the earth lies in sunshine, nothing is to be seen but clouds of smoke; but, at night, Fire puts his flaming head out of the window, and his bright eyes gleam in the darkness. He seems very merry and contented, and plays all kinds of tricks, nodding in the friendliest way to my friend the Rock, who would gladly return the compliment, were he not obliged to remain perfectly immovable.

"Since the opening of the prison window, the bay is much more beautiful. Fire, however, did not wish to be surrounded by all these attractive things, without contributing his share to them, so he threw his sparks over the shore; they fell upon the green trees, and clung fast to the shining boughs, where, red as when they sprang from the mountain, they were soon transformed to fruits, concealing within themselves the glow which they brought with them. These fruits of Fire are constantly seen, for as the leaves hang perpetually their dark, lustrous drapery over the trees, so are oranges ever found gleaming among them."

"Do these wonderful fruits never have any blossoms?" asked the Apple-tree.

"Certainly, they do, in the form of a lovely, fragrant snow; the boughs bearing fruit and buds, while the sweetness of the flowers mingles with the glow of the fruit.

"The Flames looked down from the mountain, well pleased with their gift. The Sea, with its foam-bordered garments, chanted its wondrous molodies to the listening Shore, and Air floated everywhere. No one knows about the strange things that take place in this gulf, but the Elements, and my friend the Rock, but he has promised not to reveal them, and will keep his word."

"That is right," said the Rose; "I like him for that. Is he also fond of us?"

"A perpetual spring-tide of blossoms surrounds him," replied the Stone.

"How beautiful that must be!" sighed a full-blown Rose.

"I shall see all this!" exclaimed the Brook, triumphantly.

"Then bear our greetings to the Roses on the Rocks," cried the Flowers.

"And ours to the oranges on the sea-shore," rustled the Trees.

"How am I to recognize the place?" asked the Brook.

"From my account," the Stone answered. "Men call it the 'Bay of Naples,' and the name of my friend the Rock, is Capri in their tongue."

"I shall soon find it," said the Brook, hastening on. But he had a long distance to go, and he wandered far over the boundless sea, before he perceived the wonders of which the Stone had told him. Then, breaking joyously over the Rocks, he bore to Flowers and Trees greetings from his native land, and his mission was fulfilled.

THE END.

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